



Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission

Meeting Notes of the
Watershed Plan Steering Committee
February 7, 2024 @ 8:30 a.m.
Brookview, Golden Valley

Meeting Attendees:

Committee Chair Kennedy; Commissioners Cesnik, Welch; Alternate Commissioner Polzin; Community Member Loomis; TAC Members Eckman and Scharenbroich; Administrator Jester; Commission Engineers Chandler, Williams, and Johnson

1. WELCOME

Committee Chair Kennedy opened the meeting at approximately 8:37 a.m.

2. REVIEW JANUARY 3 MEETING NOTES

Committee Member Welch recommended that the first sentence of Item #2 (Review of December meeting notes) be revised to "*Committee Member Welch noted that although no changes are needed for the meeting notes, this committee and the Commission should ~~consider being~~ be more involved in wetland management.*"

The January 3, 2024 Plan Steering Committee meeting notes were approved by consensus with the change noted above.

3. REVIEW FEEDBACK FROM JANUARY COMMISSION WORKSHOP

The group briefly discussed some of the key points from the workshop noting that it seemed some commissioners wanted to increase the priority level of education and other issues. Committee member Welch noted that the Commission has always operated with an "engineering mindset" and that perhaps it should not act as a leader in education activities. Commission Engineer Chandler noted that the workshop seemed to meet the goal of good commissioner engagement.

After some discussion the group agreed on the following revisions to the issues and goals statement as a result of the workshop:

- Add goal under impaired waters: *Maintain or improve fish index of biologic integrity for Medicine Lake.* [Medicine Lake is the only waterbody in BCWMC eligible for a potential fish bioassessment goal due to its size.]
- Revise chloride issue statement: *High chloride loading from ~~overuse~~ of winter deicers across the Bassett Creek watershed negatively impacts lakes streams, and groundwater water quality.*
- Revise language in the third goal to match language in similar goals: *Protect ~~Maintain~~ current conditions or improve water quality in priority lakes meeting State eutrophication standards, currently these lakes are: Cavanaugh Pond, Crane Lake, Parkers Lake, Sweeney Lake, Twin Lake, Westwood Lake, Wirth Lake.*
- Clarify in the goals section that the term "priority lake" refers to both priority 1 and priority 2 lakes.

Staff was directed to bring these proposed revisions to the February Commission meeting with tracked changes.

There was further discussion about how not everything can be a high priority. The Commission should be reminded that goals regarding lakeshore and streambank restoration are directly tied to water quality goals and may end up being a high priority if analysis shows that. There was more discussion on the role of education

(which will be discussed in more detail later in the planning process). It was noted that education activities are likely to be an important tool for reaching various goals. It was noted that education is expensive, that it's easier when it's tied to a particular project, and that it's difficult to measure the impact of education programs on water quality. Ultimately, the committee did not recommend changing issue priority levels.

There was some discussion about the existing priority level and classification of lakes and streams as found in the classification table in Appendix C of the current plan. Staff noted that the classification as a non-priority waterbody does not prevent Commission action (e.g., Schaper Pond). Staff will update the table with current information and bring to a future PSC meeting for review.

4. REVIEW AND DISCUSS COMMISSION'S FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION CAPACITY

The committee reviewed a memo from Administrator Jester and committee member Welch on the Commission's staff capacity. Committee member Welch expressed a desire to make the Commission more capable of directing work and more in control of their programs and projects. He noted that perhaps TAC members should not have been part of the January workshop as their input could dilute that of commissioners and alternates. He also noted that there is a high amount of turnover on the Commission making it challenging to maintain a high level of commissioner knowledge. He noted there are complex issues to address including climate resiliency. He indicated that currently commission work is implemented through a diffuse process with commissioners being pulled in different directions and without actual commissioners driving the work.

Committee member Welch went on to indicate that perhaps the structure of the organization should change to a watershed district (WD) with more funding, fewer board members, and focused work. He noted this is a critical fork in the road for the Commission.

There was discussion about how the joint powers agreement (JPA) expires at the end of the year and how converting to a WD would be a huge change that cannot be accomplished this year and has huge implications for cities considering the JPA.

There was discussion about how commissioners could be more engaged and knowledgeable including being well prepared for meetings and participating in pre-meetings with city staff.

Committee member Cesnik asked what problem would be solved by converting to a WD. She noted that the Commission is effective and gets a lot done. Administrator Jester noted that subwatershed analyses would help commissioners identify the right projects and implement projects or programs from concept through construction. She also wondered if incremental increases in staff capacity over time is an option.

Committee member Cesnik indicated that a properly guided analysis of organizational structure is needed. Chair Kennedy noted there are several steps along the way including increasing commissioner engagement and increasing staff capacity. He noted that the City of Medicine Lake would rather keep the JPA structure even if it means increased city assessments. He noted that moving to a WD is an option that would take considerable time to explore and that perhaps it represents a long-term goal.

There was a note that the BCWMC could seek legislation for taxing authority but keep the JPA (similar to the Mississippi Watershed Management Organization).

Committee member Scharenbroich noted that the City of Plymouth cares mostly about financial impact on its residents and that increasing the city assessment might be more financially beneficial than a WD. Committee member Eckman noted that it's too late in the current JPA renewal process to add the complexity of changing the organization structure. He also noted that city staff do a lot of work to implement BCWMC CIP projects and enforce BCWMC requirements – the cost of city staff time and resources is not charged back to the BCWMC (and

is therefore not reflected in BCWMC costs). Committee member Welch asked if these costs should be passed on to the BCWMC.

It was noted that commissioner engagement can be improved starting this year and that the Administrative Services Committee started discussing this topic last year. Committee chair Kennedy noted that a document including commissioner expectations may increase engagement.

Committee member Welch noted that the Commission should build institutional knowledge, it should not write a plan it cannot implement, and commissioners should think in terms of legacy rather than activity.

Committee member Polzin indicated there are both long-term and short-term questions: the organizational structure is a long-term question and staff capacity could be a shorter term question which could start with the Budget Committee. She also noted that the JPA negotiations should be transparent and acknowledge these big picture issues are being considered.

Staff was directed to bring notes on the committee's discussion of staff capacity and commissioner engagement to the Commission to keep them apprised of discussions.

5. REVIEW ISSUE STATEMENTS AND DRAFT GOALS FOR REMAINING WATERBODY AND WATERSHED QUALITY CATEGORY

Meeting time ran out for this agenda item.

6. ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned approximately 10:40 a.m.